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STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

Memorandum

To: Heads of Fire Departments

**From: Stephen D. Coan
State Fire Marshal**

Date: January 1, 2013

RE: School Safety Reminder

I am issuing this reminder, in the aftermath of the tragedy in Newtown, CT. As we react to this tragedy, we see many schools wanting to meet and discuss new increased safety measures. One concerning common thread that is being seen amongst the news reports is to further secure the school. This common thread, so far, has been reported and discussed in the media is the need to install deadbolts on school doors. This may sound like an idea, but will really create another safety issue. There are approved ways to secure a facility. I want to take this time to remind everyone that the installation of deadbolts is against the State Building Code 780 CMR and State Fire Code 527 CMR.

State Building Code 780 CMR

1008.1.9.4 Bolt locks. Manually operated flush bolts or surface bolts are not permitted.
(with very limited exceptions – speak with your local building inspector for more info.)

State Fire Code 527 CMR

10.03: General Provisions

(1) Any obstacle which may interfere with the means of egress or escape from any building or other premises, or with the access to any part of said building or premises by the fire department in case of fire, shall be removed from aisles, floors, halls, stairways and fire escapes. Doors and windows designated as exits shall be kept clear at all times.

(2) Such aisles, floors, halls, stairways, fire escapes, doors and windows shall be kept in good repair and ready for use, and shall be kept properly lighted as required by 780 CMR: *State Board*

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of Building Regulations and Standards.

527 CMR 10.03(13) Hazards to Means of Egress.

(a) Obstructions. No person shall at any time place an encumbrance of any kind before or upon any fire escape, balcony or ladder intended as a means of escape from fire. The means of egress from each part of the building, including stairways, egress doors, and any panic hardware installed thereon, aisles, corridors, passageways and similar elements of the means of egress, shall at all times be maintained in a safe condition and shall be available for immediate use and free of all obstructions.

Instead in reflecting upon the incident in Connecticut focus should be on regrouping to review the required plans identified below.

Section 363 of Chapter 159 of the Acts of 2000, requires all school districts to formulate specific school emergency plans. This Act, places the responsibility to develop these plans upon the Superintendent of each school district and requires that the Superintendent work with local fire and police departments in its development.

“Notwithstanding any general or special law to the contrary, the superintendent of each school district shall, prior to the beginning of the school year, meet with the fire chief (**emphasis added**) and police chief of the city, town or district to formulate a school specific "Multi-hazard evacuation plan" for each school under the superintendent's supervision. Said multi-hazard evacuation plan shall encompass, but not be limited to, evacuation for fires, hurricanes and other hazardous storms or disaster in which bodily injury might occur, shootings and other terrorist activities, and bomb threats. Said plan shall be formulated for each school building after a review of each building. Said plan shall include, but not be limited to: (1) establishment of a crisis response team; (2) designation as to who is in charge of said team and designated substitutes; (3) a communications plan; (4) crisis procedures for safe entrance to and exit from the school by students, parents and employees; and (5) policies for enforcing school discipline and maintaining a safe and orderly environment during the crisis. Each district, with the assistance of the local police and fire departments (**emphasis added**), shall annually review and update as appropriate said plan. At the beginning of each school year, students at each school shall be instructed as to the plan that is developed.”

This tragedy should bring about the need to review and adhere to the required policies and plans to ensure student safety and to practice lockdown drills.

If you need additional assistance contact the Code Compliance and Enforcement Unit at 978-567-3375 or in Western MA 413-587-3181.